

The Parable of the Great Supper (Q 14:16-21, 23) and the Redaction of Q

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Abstract

In *The Formation of Q*, Kloppenborg identifies three redactional layers in the Sayings Gospel Q: the “formative stratum” (or Q¹), the “main redaction” (or Q²), and the “final recension” (or Q³). He ascribes Q 14:16-24 to the main redaction. As an alternative, it will presently be argued that this passage appeared in the formative stratum before it was incorporated into the main redaction.

Key terms

Sayings Gospel Q; Kloppenborg; Redaction; Stratification; Stratigraphy; Parable of the Great Supper; Parable of the Leaven; Parable of the Mustard Seed; Q 14:16-21, 23; formative stratum; main redaction

1 Introduction

In *The Formation of Q*, Kloppenborg (1987) identifies three redactional layers in the Sayings Gospel Q: the “formative stratum” (or Q¹), the “main redaction” (or Q²), and the “final recension” (or Q³). He ascribes Q 14:16-24 to the main redaction (Kloppenborg 1987, 229-230; cf. 1995, 290). As an alternative, it will presently be argued that this passage appeared in the formative stratum before it was incorporated into the main redaction. As the foregoing paragraph reveals, this article accepts the stratigraphy of Q proposed by Kloppenborg in 1987, thereby using it as a basis for further study. A number of other scholars have done the same (e.g. Vaage 1994, 7, 107; Cotter 1995, 117; Arnal 2001, 5; Rollens 2014, 94-95, 105, 109-113). The present author has defended his acceptance and approval of Kloppenborg’s stratigraphy of Q at length elsewhere (see Howes 2015, 61-89, 151).

Although the reconstruction of Q 14:16-21, 23 faces tremendous difficulties, most contemporary scholars agree that there is enough verbal and conceptual overlap between Matt 22:2-10 and Luke 14:16-23 to justify its place in the Sayings Gospel Q (Davies and Allison 1997, 194; Fleddermann 2005, 722; e.g. Donahue 1988, 93-94; Kloppenborg 1995, 292; cf. Funk 1966, 163; Scott 1981, 32; Foster 2014, 275; Roth 2014, 384; see Tuckett 1996, 92-93).¹ The International Q Project provides the

¹ Although some scholars do doubt the attribution of this text to the Sayings Gospel Q (e.g. Marshall 1978, 584; Davies and Allison 1997, 194; Allison 2000, 232; Luz 2005, 47; cf. Dodd 1958, 121; Blomberg 1990, 237; Snodgrass 2008, 310; Foster 2014, 275).

following reconstruction and translation of Q 14:16-21, 23 in their *Critical Edition of Q* (Robinson, Hoffmann and Kloppenborg 2000, 432-449; 2002, 134-135)²:

¹⁶ἄνθρωπός τις ἐποίει δεῖπνον [μέγα, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν πολλοὺς] ¹⁷καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν δοῦλον αὐτοῦ [τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ δείπνου] εἰπεῖν τοῖς κεκλημένοις· ἔρχεσθε, ὅτι ἤδη ἔτοιμά ἐστιν. ¹⁸... ἀγρόν, .. ^{19?} .. ^{20?} .. ²¹«καὶ <> ὁ δοῦλος <> τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα.» τότε ὀργισθεὶς ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης εἶπεν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ· ²³ἔξελθε εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ ὅσους ἐὰν εὔρ<ης> καλέσ<ον>, ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος.

¹⁶ A certain person prepared a [large] dinner, [and invited many]. ¹⁷And he sent his slave [at the time of the dinner] to say to the invited: Come, for it is now ready. ¹⁸«One declined because of his» farm. ^{19?}«Another declined because of his business.» ^{20?} «A third declined because of his wedding.³» ²¹«And the slave, <on coming, said> these things to his master.» Then the householder, enraged, said to his slave: ²³Go out on the roads, and whomever you find, invite, so that my house may be filled.⁴

2 Kloppenborg's analysis

Kloppenborg's (1987, 229-230) attribution of Q 14:16-21, 23 to the main redaction depends on two interdependent aspects, namely its literary context in Q and its consequent interpretation (cf. Zimmermann 2009, 173). Kloppenborg argues that, given its position after Q 13:24-35⁵, the parable functions allegorically in Q, with the large dinner representing the eschatological banquet, those who declined the initial invitation representing greater Israel, and those who end up being invited representing Gentiles

² Allison (2000, 232) claims that the International Q Project features the whole parable between brackets (as an indication of uncertainty about its presence in Q). This is simply not true.

³ This sentence represents my own addition to the *Critical Edition of Q*. Although the Q version almost certainly featured a third excuse (cf. Funk 1966, 186; Scott 1981, 35; Crossan 1985, 41), it is difficult to reconstruct this third excuse, given the complete lack of verbal overlap. In my view, some version of the Lukan excuse of a wedding is most probable, not only because it is likewise attested in the Gospel of Thomas (64), but also because the theme of a wedding appears throughout Matt 22:2-14, albeit not as the third excuse (cf. Scott 1981, 35; 1989, 161, 167, 170). At any rate, commentators agree that Matthew's third excuse is obviously secondary.

⁴ In Q reconstruction, double square brackets (i.e. [. . .]) indicate a probability of {C}, which is lower than {A} or {B}, but higher than {D} or {U}. Pointed brackets (i.e. < . . . >) indicate some measure of conjecture, but with reference to the Matthean and Lukan texts. Guillemets (i.e. « . . . ») indicate phrases that seem to have originated in Q, but for which it is impossible to produce a verbatim or close-to-verbatim reading with any degree of certainty. For a more detailed description of the application of these sigla, see Robinson, Hoffmann and Kloppenborg (2000, 563-564; 2002, 153-155).

⁵ Matt 7:13-14, 22-23; 8:11-12; 20:16; 23:37-39; 25:10-12 // Luke 13:24-35.

(cf. Kirk 1998, 251; Kloppenborg 2000a, 121⁶; Piper 2000, 237; Valantasis 2005, 191).⁷ The Synoptic Gospels clearly assimilated and developed this line of interpretation (Lührmann 1994, 61). Some have argued that Q 13:28-29 does not pertain to the eschatological ingathering of Gentiles at all, but rather to the eschatological return of Diaspora Jews (e.g. Davies and Allison 1991, 27-28; Horsley 1995, 38; 1999, 65, 69, 94-95, 97, 229, 242, 283; Allison 1997, 176-191; 2000, 166-169; Verheyden 2001, 702; cf. Jacobson 1992, 204). If so, there is reason to doubt that the parable in Q 14:16-21, 23 distinguishes between Israel and Gentiles (cf. Allison 1997, 188). Rather, the distinction would then be between the Diaspora, on the one hand, and the leaders and/or inhabitants associated with the geo-political centre of Jerusalem (including perhaps greater Judea and/or Palestine), on the other (cf. Etchells 1998, 186, 188-189; Horsley 1999, 86, 88, 92; Snodgrass 2008, 308). It is also not impossible that both geo-political and ethnic distinctions were intended at the same time, even if this complicated the internal logic of the final text (see footnote 8).

The foregoing geo-political distinction hints at an overlapping socio-economic distinction as well, between the Jewish elite and the *'am ha-'ares*, or “people of the land.” As Kloppenborg (1987, 230) points out, however, the initial invitation is to all of Israel, not some sub-group within Israel. Following the logic of the parable, a socio-economic distinction within the confines of Israel would imply that the *'am ha-'ares* were not initially invited to the eschatological banquet (Marshall 1978, 585; cf. Funk 1966, 189-190; Jacobson 1992, 219; Snodgrass 2008, 315). This goes against the Jewish *Heilsgeschichte*, according to which all of Israel were liberated from Egypt and included in the great covenant between God and Israel, especially the poor. By the same token, the ultimate open invitation is to those who were not initially invited, meaning that if the initial invitation was to Israel, the final invitation can only include Gentiles (cf. Bultmann 1968, 175).⁸ It needs to be stressed, however, that these arguments are only

⁶ For a short period of time, including the year 2000, John S. Kloppenborg's surname features as “Kloppenborg Verbin” in his publications. In earlier and later publications, his surname only features as “Kloppenborg.” To avoid confusion, I will feature his surname throughout this article as “Kloppenborg.”

⁷ In Jewish tradition, it was standard to describe the eschatological kingdom of Israel in terms of a great banquet (Dodd 1958, 121; Hunter 1971, 93; Blomberg 1990, 233-234; Luz 2001, 9; 2005, 50, 52; cf. Scott 1989, 172-173; Snodgrass 2008, 300, 301-302, 311; see Bryan 2002, 77-81; cf. Isa 25:6; 1 Enoch 62:14; 2 Enoch 42:3-14).

⁸ The same arguments pertain equally to the distinction between Jerusalem and the Diaspora. In other words, if the Parable of the Great Supper were intended to be understood along the lines of a geo-political distinction in the final form of Q, it would necessitate the misguided conclusion that Jews living outside Jerusalem, Judea and/or Palestine were not included in the covenant unless and until they accepted some sort of second invitation, and neither were their ancestors. On the other hand, Q 13:34-35, which immediately precedes the Parable of the Great Supper in the final form of Q, clearly speaks against Jerusalem and requires the subsequent parable to be read along the lines of a geo-political distinction (cf. Kloppenborg 1995, 292). These two observations expose a disjunction in the logic of Q 13:28-29, [30], 34-35; 14:16-21, 23. The main redactor was either unaware of this disjunction or untroubled by it. It is possible that the main redaction understood this cluster of material to imply both

valid if the parable is read allegorically, with the initial invitees representing (a subgroup within) Israel, and the subsequent feast representing the eschatological banquet (cf. Marshall 1978, 585). It follows that the parable could have been intended as a non-allegorical story at an earlier stage, during which socio-economic concerns could have been intended, perhaps even exclusively so (cf. Jeremias 1972, 69; Luz 2005, 51).

Be that as it may, Kloppenborg is undoubtedly correct that the parable needs to be read allegorically if its immediate literary context in the main redaction is considered. Conversely, if read allegorically, the parable fits perfectly in its literary context in the main redaction. The parable is also thematically very similar to the rest of the main redaction, where Israel's rejection of Q's message is likewise met with anger and disbelief (cf. Q 7:31-35; 10:13-15; 11:49-51; 13:34-35). If the parable has Gentiles in mind as the ultimate guests, the story's surprising ending is further comparable to the measure of astonishment described in the rest of Q² at the positive reaction of Gentiles to the message of Q's Jesus (cf. Q 7:1-10; 11:31-32; cf. Robinson 1994, 252-253). Like the remainder of Q², the parable functions as a piece of polemic against greater Israel. Israel's position of privilege over against the nations is not automatically guaranteed (cf. Q 3:7-9; 13:28-29; 22:28, 30; cf. Hunter 1964, 57; Perrin 1967, 114; Etchells 1998, 188-189; Bryan 2002, 81; Nolland 2005, 889-890; Snodgrass 2008, 306, 308, 314, 317, 322). In fact, the literary context in Q 13:25-27, 28-29 indicates that the parable deliberately attempts to portray (a portion of) greater Israel as outsiders, unseated by Gentiles and/or the Diaspora (see Smith 2014, 52-53; cf. Catchpole 1993, 282; Bultmann 1994, 32; Joseph 2012, 89). Hence, the passage complies with two of Kloppenborg's three criteria for attribution to the main redaction, namely "characteristic motifs" and "implied audience."⁹

Although I agree with Kloppenborg's analysis of Q 14:16-21, 23 on the level of Q², there is no comparable analysis of this text on the level of Q¹. The question has to be raised: what would be the result if the parable's literary context in the formative stratum were considered? Since the parable's literary context drives its interpretation for Kloppenborg, which in turn drives its allocation to the main redaction, it stands to reason that a different literary context, say that of Q¹ (to the extent that it can be recovered), would foreseeably alter not only the parable's interpretation, but also its redactional placement (cf. Zimmermann 2009, 173).

a geo-political and an ethnic distinction at the same time, even though the combination of these two features introduced internal tensions. These distinctions could in any case not have been clear-cut, since the good news of God's kingdom was rejected neither by all Jews nor by all elite (cf. Snodgrass 2008, 314-315, 321). This is true for both the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Q people.

⁹ Allison (1997, 20 n. 85) claims that the parable's literary context in Q's final form is instead suggestive of its function as "paraenesis for insiders." This claim is not substantiated by supportive argumentation, and it is hard to imagine how this could be the case. If anything, the literary context of Q 14:16-21, 23 in the main redaction and final form of Q indicates that the parable needs to be understood as an attempt at boundary demarcation (see Smith 2014, 52-53; cf. Kloppenborg 1995, 292; Bryan 2002, 79-80).

3 A different context

I have argued elsewhere that Q 13:25 belongs to the formative stratum, while Q 13:26-27 constitutes an addition by Q's main redactor (see Howes forthcoming).¹⁰ If this is correct, it would mean that the Parable of the Great Supper followed directly after Q 13:24, 25 in the formative stratum. Significantly, both of these texts are about gaining entrance to a house (cf. Johnson-DeBaufre 2005, 104). Noticeable are also the following catchword connections: (1) "many" (πολύς) in Q 13:24 and Q 14:16; (2) "master" (κύριος) in Q 13:25 and Q 14:21; and (3) "householder" (οικοδεσπότης) in Q 13:25 and Q 14:21 (cf. Marshall 1978, 566; Kirk 1998, 247 n. 357; Fleddermann 2005, 724, 736, 737). Here is an overview of the Q¹ material that would have immediately preceded the Parable of the Great Supper, as reconstructed in the Critical Edition of Q:¹¹

13:18 τίτι ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίτι ὁμοιώσω αὐτήν; 19 ὁμοία
ἐστὶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔβαλεν εἰς [κῆπ]ον αὐτοῦ· καὶ

¹⁰ Because the attribution of Q 13:25 to Q¹ plays an important role in rest of this article, I offer a very brief (and oversimplified) summary of the arguments made in greater detail elsewhere to support this conclusion (see Howes forthcoming). The following textual and semantic features betray a likely redactional seam between Q 13:25 and Q 13:26-27: (1) vv. 26-27 elaborate an otherwise appropriate conclusion at the end of v. 25; (2) the conspicuous use of the second-person plural in Q 13:25-27; (3) the clumsy syntax of Q 13:25-26; (4) a change in setting from the private sphere in Q 13:25 to the public sphere in Q 13:26-27; (5) a development from the uncomplicated imagery of master-worker relationships in Q 13:25 to the complicated imagery that deliberately evokes Christological, eschatological and polemical application in Q 13:26-27; (6) v. 27 is semantically redundant as a more forceful repetition of the phrase "I do not know you" in v. 25; (7) vv. 25 and 26-27, respectively, offer different reasons for denying entry, namely that the door had already been shut and because of lawlessness; (8) vv. 26-27 have a transitory function between Q 13:25 and Q 13:28-29; and (9) the direct quotation of scripture (LXX Ps 6:9) in Q 13:26-27 is suggestive of redactional activity. In the second part of the article, Kloppenborg's criteria of characteristic forms, characteristic motifs and implied audience are applied to the single text of Q 13:25 in order to illustrate that this text is more appropriately attributed to Q's formative stratum than to its main redaction: (1) characteristic Q¹ form of Q 13:25: maxim or aphorism; (2) characteristic Q¹ motifs in Q 13:25: farm workers, hospitality, gaining entry to a house, corporeal survival, food; (3) the audience implied by Q 13:25: the verse functions to support the instruction in Q 13:24, which is aimed at insiders, and its parabolic wisdom seems to be intended for contemplation by insiders.

¹¹ Even though Kloppenborg fails to locate Q 13:18-21 stratigraphically in his *Formation of Q*, he does attribute this text to the formative stratum in later publications (e.g. Kloppenborg 1995, 305-311; 2000a, 146; 2014, 319; cf. Cromhout 2007, 276; see Vaage 1994, 119-120). There is legitimate doubt about the attribution of Q 14:11 (Matt 23:12 // Luke 14:11) to Q: "Everyone exalting oneself will be humbled, and the one humbling oneself will be exalted" (πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ὁ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται). The parables of Jesus were prone to attracting generic logia as these traditions developed (Hunter 1964, 19). If Q 14:11 were in the Sayings Gospel, it would in my opinion have belonged to the main redaction, not the formative stratum. On a thematic level, the maxim fits the preceding Q² material in Q 13:28-35 very well, especially Q 13:30, which might likewise not have been part of Q. Moreover, the maxim's "reversal of fortunes" theme contradicts the subsequent parable's "open commensality" theme, at least as it was probably understood on the level of the formative stratum (see below).

ἠϋξῆσεν καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον, καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατεσκήνωσεν ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ. ²⁰[[καὶ πάλιν]]· τίني ὁμοιώσω τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ; ²¹ὁμοία ἐστὶν ζύμη, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυψεν εἰς ἀλεύρου σάτα τρία ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθη ὅλον. ²⁴εἰσέλθατε διὰ τῆς στενῆς θύρας, ὅτι πολλοὶ ζητήσουσιν εἰσελθεῖν καὶ ὀλίγοι [[εἰσὶν οἱ <εἰσερχόμενοι δι> αὐτῇ<ς>]]. ²⁵ἂφ' οὗ ἂν [[ἐγερθῇ]] ὁ [[οἰκοδεσπότης]] καὶ κλείς[[ῃ τ]ῇ[[ν]] θύρα[[ν καὶ ἄρξησθε ἕξω ἐστάναι καὶ κρούειν τὴν θύραν]] λέγοντες· κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν, καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ἐρεῖ ὑμῖν· οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς.

^{13:18}What is the kingdom of God like, and with what am I to compare it? ¹⁹It is like a seed of mustard which a person took and threw into his [[garden]]. And it grew and developed into a tree, and the birds of the sky nested in its branches. ²⁰[[And again]]: With what am I to compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like yeast [[or leaven]], which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was fully fermented. ²⁴Enter through the narrow door, for many will seek to enter and few [[are those who <enter through> it]]. ²⁵When the [[householder has arisen]] and locked the door, [[and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door]], saying: Master, open for us, and he will answer you: I do not know you.

Before discussing the influence of this material on the interpretation of our parable, some commentary is necessary on each of the individual traditions that make up the quotation above.

3.1 *The mustard seed and the leaven (Q 13:18-19, 20-21)*

To my mind, parable scholars like Scott (1989, 321-328, 373-387; 2002, 21-23, 24-25), Crossan (1991, 276-279, 280-281) and Funk (2006, 102-105) provide the best reading of the two parables in Q 13:18-21 (cf. Jacobson 1992, 205; Funk and Hoover 1993, 195, 347, 523; Vaage 1994, 64, 65; 2001, 486; Allison 2000, 136-137; Valantasis 2005, 177-180). In these parables, the kingdom of God is associated with the uncontrollable and undesirable defilement that usually results from mustard shrubs and leaven, two impure items in ancient Judaism.¹² In more clinical terms, these two parables compare the kingdom of God to an impure element that is introduced to an otherwise neutral or positive source, with the inevitable result of contaminating the whole source. The mustard shrub does this to the garden, and the leaven does this to the flour. As Scott (2002, 23) cleverly paraphrases, God's kingdom is likened to a rotten apple that spoils the barrel. Hence, the kingdom of God is to be found at those instances when the introduction of a contaminant, in the ancient Jewish sense, causes purity and

¹² Funk interprets only the Parable of the Leaven as a parable about defilement, reading the Parable of the Mustard Seed exclusively in terms of its comparison with the mighty cedar of Lebanon (see below).

normativity to be wholly displaced by impurity and undesirability. What it means to be holy is redefined and inverted to not only include the profane, but to ultimately also be completely permeated by it (Funk 2006, 104).

In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the reference to “the birds of the sky nesting in its branches” recalls from Hebrew Scripture texts like Ezek 17:22-24, where the future kingdom of Israel is likened to the mighty cedar of Lebanon (cf. esp. Ezek 31:6; Dan 4:12, 21¹³).¹⁴ Yet, the mustard shrub is a burlesque of this impressive vision, deliberately substituting it with an unimpressive and unclean plant as a more appropriate metaphor of God’s kingdom (Vaage 1994, 64; 2001, 486; Funk and Hoover 1993, 194-195, 346, 484-485; Funk 2006, 117; see Scott 1989, 385-387; cf. Crossan 1991, 277; Allison 2000, 136-137). The kingdom of God ends up being almost the exact opposite of what one would expect (cf. Bock 1996, 1225 n. 7, 1227; Luz 2001, 261; see Allison 2000, 136-137, 221-222). Instead of being massively powerful and intrinsically holy, it is pathetically undersized and inherently defiled. Allison (2000, 136-137, 192, 220) also points out that the mentioned intertexts deal with the subject matter of ungodly and evil powers, which is comparable to the ancient Jewish associations of leaven in the subsequent parable with evil (cf. Scott 2002, 23; cf. Exod 12:19; Mark 8:15; Gal 5:9; 1 Cor 5:7). If this is correct, it would follow that the kingdom of God is not only comparable to traditional categories of impurity, but also with traditional categories of evil.

There are indications, however, that precisely the clause “and the birds of the sky nested in its branches” was added by Q’s main redactor, which would mean that it did not feature in Q’s formative stratum (cf. Luz 2001, 258). Firstly, the parable features an adequate and self-sufficient ending if this clause is removed (Vaage 2001, 487). Secondly, the content of the relevant clause seems to complicate the metaphor somewhat, with the kingdom now being not only about impurity, but also about mocking the traditional cedar of Lebanon. Thirdly, the fact that the clause quotes a familiar text from Hebrew Scripture is in itself suggestive of redactional activity. Vaage (2001, 484, 486-487) has noticed that Q 13:18-19, Q 13:25-27 and Q 13:34-35 all feature references to Hebrew Scripture at the end of a pericope that would have ended sufficiently without such a reference (cf. Howes forthcoming on Q 13:25-27). Fourthly, the potential addition seems to spoil Q¹’s deliberate parallelism with the Parable of the Leaven, which lacks a corresponding biblical allusion (cf. Kloppenborg 1995, 305-308; Luz 2001, 258). In other words, whereas the clause “and it grew and developed into a tree” in Q 13:19 is followed by an allusion to scripture, its parallel clause “until it was fully fermented” in Q 13:21 is not. Lastly, the clause in question might have functioned

¹³ Cf. also Judg 9:15; Ps 104:12; Lam 4:20; Bar 1:12; Sir 14:26; 1 Enoch 90:30; 1QH 6:14-16.

¹⁴ Most interpreters comment or elaborate on this intertextual connection: Marshall 1978, 561; Davies and Allison 1991, 420; Jacobson 1992, 204; Funk and Hoover 1993, 194, 346; Bock 1996, 1224, 1226; Tuckett 1996, 143; Luz 2001, 261; Vaage 2001, 486; Nolland 2005, 551; Fleddermann 2005, 670; Frenschkowski 2014, 223; see Scott 1989, 383-385; Allison 2000, 134-137; Funk 2006, 113-120.

on some level as a veiled reference to the presence of Gentiles in God's kingdom (Marshall 1978, 561; Davies and Allison 1991, 420; Jacobson 1992, 204; Allison 1997, 183; Luz 2001, 262; Fleddermann 2005, 670; cf. Kirk 1998, 304; Funk 2006, 115; see Bock 1996, 1226-1227).¹⁵ Such an allusion to Gentiles would have been particularly conducive to the concerns of the main redactor, explaining at least partly what could have motivated the addition. In support, one could draw attention to the thematic overlap of this oblique reference to Gentiles with the material that follows in the main redaction (i.e. Q 13:24-29, [30]; 14:16-21, 23, but esp. Q 13:28-29) (cf. Bock 1996, 1227). This overlap does not apply on the level of Q's formative stratum.¹⁶

Another aspect of the text deserves diachronic consideration. Mark 4:32 features a "shrub" (λάχανον) instead of a "tree" (δένδρον). Some scholars maintain that Mark is more original at this point (e.g. Crossan 1991, 277; Funk and Hoover 1993, 59, 484, 485; Funk 2006, 101, 108, 115). This is supported by the similar usage of "shrub" instead of "tree" in the Gospel of Thomas, saying 20 (cf. Funk and Hoover 1993, 484; Luz 2001, 258). If these scholars are correct, it is at least conceivable that the formative stratum featured "shrub," and that Q's main redactor changed it to "tree." The inconspicuous and contaminated essence of the mustard shrub fits well with the rest of the formative stratum, where the kingdom of God and the followers of Jesus are particularly associated with the poor and insignificant (cf. Q 6:20-23; 9:58; 10:3, 21¹⁷; 11:2-4, 9-13; 12:4-7, 11-12, 22-31). By contrast, the main redaction is much more interested in contrasting the superiority of the in-group with the inferiority and ultimate demise of the out-group (cf. Q 7:9, 31-35; 10:12-15; 11:19, 29-32, 39, 41-44, 46-52; 12:45-46; 13:28-29; 22:28, 30).¹⁸ It would therefore have been in the interest of the main redactor to remove the association of God's kingdom with insignificance by exchanging the word "shrub" with "tree."¹⁹ If these suggestions are correct, it would

¹⁵ Nolland (2005, 551 n. 92) doubts this possibility for Matthew, because the evangelist has failed to retain the word "all" (כָּל; πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν) from Ezek 17:23 (and 31:6).

¹⁶ Against the proposal that the clause "and the birds of the sky nested in its branches" was added by Q's main redactor, one could point to the fact that both Mark and Q feature the clause (Luz 2001, 258). The strength of this argument depends on whether or not Mark is taken to have known the final form of Q (cf. Fleddermann 2005, 666).

¹⁷ I have argued elsewhere that Q 10:21 belongs to the formative stratum (see Howes 2013).

¹⁸ There might an exception. In Q 7:28, "the least significant" (ὁ μικρότερος) members of God's kingdom are described as being greater than John the Baptist. Yet, this text does not associate the kingdom of God with insignificance or impurity. Instead, it associates the kingdom of God with the absence of an internal hierarchy. In other words, it is not God's kingdom that is described as being insignificant, but *some* of its members, whose insignificance ends up being nullified in any case.

¹⁹ Against the suggestion that Q's main redactor changed "shrub" to "tree," one could point to other scholars who hold that Q's "tree" is more original, and perhaps even authentic (e.g. Davies and Allison 1991, 416; Jacobson 1992, 204; Luz 2001, 258; Fleddermann 2005, 666). Accordingly, Mark could have substituted "tree" in his source (be it Q or some other source) with "bush" (cf. Fleddermann 2005, 666). He might have done so because of his intimate knowledge of mustard plants, and the botanical inappropriateness of calling them "trees." Another motivating factor might have been to tone down the exaggeration inherent in the use of "tree" (Fleddermann 2005, 666; cf. Davies and Allison 1991, 416).

mean that the following version of Q 13:19 featured in the formative stratum: “It is like a seed of mustard which a person took and threw into his garden. And it grew and developed into a shrub.”

To be sure, the suggested redactional activity is not important for my central case, since the parable remains primarily about defilement on the level of Q’s formative stratum, regardless of which version stood in Q¹ (cf. Scott 2002, 25). Similarly, it is at least conceivable that the parody with the cedar of Lebanon would not have been lost on the audience, despite the absence of the scriptural reference. These people were highly familiar with the traditional association of God’s kingdom with the cedar of Lebanon. Even so, these observations caution one against making too much of the parody with the cedar of Lebanon when interpreting the parable on the level of Q’s formative stratum. Whatever the text might have looked like in the formative stratum, the main focus of the two parables in Q 13:18-21 was to compare God’s kingdom with the polluting qualities of mustard and leaven.

The interpretation of the two parables in Q 13:18-21 proposed here is not to exclude other aspects or accents of interpretation that might be just as valid (see Funk 2006, 39-43, 96-98), since these parables were probably “plurisignificative,” to use Funk’s term (Funk 2006, 103; cf. Tuckett 1996, 146). One such complementary accent is the concept of miraculous growth and expansion to be associated with God’s kingdom, perhaps with the focus being on the contrast between humble beginnings and remarkable endings (see Jeremias 1972, 148-149; Marshall 1978, 559-560; Davies and Allison 1991, 415-417, 421-422; Bock 1996, 1221-1229; Tuckett 1996, 143-144; Luz 2001, 258-261). It is unlikely, though, that this was the parables’ *main* message for either the historical Jesus or Q’s formative stratum (cf. Bultmann 1968, 200; Scott 2002, 25; Funk 2006, 108). The contrast in size between the minute mustard seed and the large mustard tree is never spelled out in Q as it is in Mark and Matthew, but merely implied (Luz 2001, 257-258; Robinson 2003, 31 n. 19; Fleddermann 2005, 665-666). Moreover, if we are correct about the editorial activity of Q’s main redactor (see above), it would follow that even those accents on expansion that *do* appear in Q were only introduced at the level of Q’s main redaction.²⁰ This is not to say that the expansion motif was wholly absent or insignificant in the formative stratum, but rather that it was at that stage largely overshadowed by the contamination motif.²¹ The latter applies equally to the Parable of the Leaven, even if it mentions a large amount of flour (see below). In

²⁰ Kloppenborg (1995, 308) argues that Q¹’s act of creating a close literary parallel between the two parables in Q 13:18-21 had the effect of emphasising “(1) that the kingdom of God is the subject of the discourse, (2) that human action is involved in the initial ‘hidden’ state, and (3) that the process of growth is, like mustard germinating or leavening, rapid, dramatic, and incessant, producing results out of proportion to the initial state.” I agree with this assessment, but it seems that Kloppenborg has left out the most important emphasis created by the manufacturing of these parallel texts, namely the process of “rapid, dramatic, and incessant” *contamination*. To my mind, it was only at the level of the main redaction that “expansion” overthrew “contamination” to become the central motif.

²¹ It is also to say that the two parables were not interested in eschatology at that stage.

this latter parable, the amount of flour is large from the beginning, so that it is impossible to talk about a motif of “expansion” at all. The change that takes place is related to the process of fermentation (or pollution), not the process of enlargement. By the time Q received its final form, the expansion motif was central, underlining the contrast between the Q people’s current state of insignificance with their ultimate eschatological state of superiority (cf. Kloppenborg 1987, 223 n. 214; Jacobson 1992, 204-205; Kirk 1998, 246-247, 300, 303; Horsley 1999, 87, 88; Järvinen 2001, 521; Robinson 2003, 31-32; Joseph 2012, 29; Foster 2014, 283-284; see Vaage 1994, 63-64; Fleddermann 2005, 669-671, 672).

A complementary accent that does indeed relate particularly to both the formative stratum and the main redaction, even if not necessarily to the level of the historical Jesus, is the association in these parables between the kingdom of God and food. It should not be overlooked that both parables associate the kingdom of God with ingredients used in the preparation of food, namely mustard and flour. Throughout Q, the kingdom of God is particularly associated with food (see Valantasis 2005, 190-191; cf. Vaage 1994, 63, 64).²² Another such accent specifically related to Q’s understanding of God’s kingdom is the emphasis in the Parable of the Leaven on “hiding” (ἐγκρύπτω) the leaven in the dough (Fleddermann 2005, 671; cf. Marshall 1978, 561; Jacobson 1992, 204; Funk and Hoover 1993, 195; Luz 2001, 262-263; Scott 2002, 22; Valantasis 2005, 180; Funk 2006, 100-101, 104). Other passages in Q likewise associate the kingdom of God with hiddenness (cf. Q 10:21; 11:33; 12:2-3; [Q 17:20-21]; 19:21; see Fleddermann 2005, 671-672).

3.2 *The narrow door and the locked door (Q 13:24, 25)*

The association between God’s kingdom and food might help clarify the link between the two parables and the material that follows them in Q⁽¹⁾. In the Parable of the Leaven, the “three measures” (σάτα τρία) equates to about fifty pounds of flour, which would produce enough bread for over a hundred people (Marshall 1978, 561; Luz 2001, 262; Funk 2006, 101; cf. Davies and Allison 1991, 423; Tuckett 1996, 144; Scott 2002, 22; Nolland 2005, 554). In other words, the baking anticipates a very large meal, or, as Funk (2006, 101) puts it, “a festive occasion of significant proportions” (cf. Davies and Allison 1991, 423; Scott 2002, 22). When this element of the parable is brought to bear on the logion that directly follows it at Q 13:24, the meaning of the latter logion is augmented to involve entry into a large meal (cf. Kirk 1998, 304). Thus, the preceding parable hints at what lies beyond the narrow door once it is traversed: a massive party. Such background information is only suggested, so that the logion itself might still be mainly about the difficulties of discipleship (cf. e.g. Kloppenborg 1987, 235; Davies and Allison 1988, 696). In fact, these two features of Q 13:24 complement each other.

²² Cf. Q 6:20-21; 10:8-9; 11:2-3, 11-13; 12:22-31, 42-46; 13:18-19, 20-21, 28-29; 14:16-21, 23.

If radical discipleship is likened to entering through a narrow door, then participating in the celebrations of God's kingdom is the reward of such effort (cf. Scott 1989, 172; Kirk 1998, 304, 305).

The instruction to enter through the narrow door is then followed by the logion of Q 13:25, in which the door is locked by the householder. In the context of the formative stratum, v. 25 functions to buttress the preceding instruction. The fact that the householder is addressed as "master" (κύριε) indicates that the people knocking on his door are inferiors, most likely slaves, day-labourers or household staff (cf. Herzog 1994, 157). Taken on its own, Q 13:25 claims that if a worker arrives at his master's house after the door has been locked, that worker would not be allowed inside. Such a scenario would probably have been commonplace, since ancient masters were notoriously callous (see Bradley 1984, 18, 121-123, 137, 140-141; Yavetz 1988, 158-159; Hezser 2005, 58, 94, 97; Joshel 2010, 40, 122-123, 152). Harsh treatment was not only directed at slaves, but often also at non-servile workers (cf. White 1970, 348, 360; Joshel 2010, 174). One should also not overlook the possibility that those outside the door really are strangers, and that the householder speaks the truth when he claims not to know them. The mission discourse in Q 10:2-12 would seem to support the latter proposal, since it describes a stranger in particular either being allowed or not being allowed into someone's house to receive hospitality and food (cf. Q 11:9-13; cf. Valantasis 2005, 190, 191). Whether the outsiders are the master's own subordinates or unknown strangers, the scenario would still have been a familiar and/or typical one. As a truism, the saying would have been well-suited to substantiate the preceding logion. Hence, the catchword "door" (θύρα) was probably not the only factor that motivated the linking of these two sayings. Taken together, the two sayings instruct their audience to enter when the opportunity presents itself, or face the possibility of being locked out (see Tuckett 1996, 191-192).

The background of a large meal, suggested by the Parable of the Leaven, adds another element to the hermeneutical context. The imagery created is that of the undernourished underclass being excluded from a massive get-together with plenty of food to go around. The householder's actions are particularly explicable in the setting of a banquet, since refusing to open for inferiors and denying any knowledge of their identity would have been a way for him to save face and increase his honour in the presence of his guests (cf. Q 11:43). To be sure, the householder's response gives expression and form to the invisible boundary between honourable and honourless. This scenario is augmented when it is recognised that gaining entry to a house as a means of acquiring sustenance is an important topic for Q (cf. Q 10:5-6; 11:[5-8], 9-10). In this respect, Q relates to those on the lower levels of the socio-economic hierarchy. Deliberately excluded from the implied banquet in Q 13:25 are those socio-economic underlings who need it the most. I can imagine Q's audience nodding their heads in

recognition of the typical scenario of a householder locking out the less fortunate at the occasion of a mammoth celebration (cf. Funk 1966, 191, 194).

4.3 *The dinner party (Q 14:16-21, 23)*

It is at this point that the Parable of the Great Supper follows in the formative stratum. After exposing the typicality of societal norms and customs, Q's Jesus creates the unfamiliar and unusual scenario of a householder who invites random strangers to his banquet, including especially the *'am ha-'ares* (cf. Jeremias 1972, 178; Bock 1996, 1276; Kirk 1998, 253; Luz 2005, 49, 50, 51). That the feast ended up being attended mostly by the needy, and that this was deliberate, is a legitimate deduction to make from the fact that the slave was instructed to find people "on the roads" (εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς) (Marshall 1978, 590; Etchells 1998, 187; Kirk 1998, 253; Bryan 2002, 80; cf. Scott 1989, 168; Bock 1996, 1275, 1276). In Q 13:24-25, "many" (πολλοί) tried to enter the banquet, but only a privileged "few" (ὀλίγοι) were allowed inside, because the householder restricted the access of those at the lower levels of society (cf. Fleddermann 2005, 738; Smith 2014, 52-53). In Q 14:16-21, 23, by contrast, the householder deliberately tells his slave to invite "as many as you can find" (ὅσους ἂν εὑρήσῃς), so that everyone and anyone who wants to participate in the lavish banquet may do so (cf. Crossan 1991, 262; Kirk 1998, 247; Nolland 2005, 888; Valantasis 2005, 192).²³ It is precisely the contrast between Q 13:24-25 and Q 14:16-21, 23 that highlights the peculiarity and shock value of the parable's unexpected ending. The socio-economic boundary created by the householder's response in Q 13:25 is shattered by the householder's reaction in Q 14:23 (cf. Funk 1966, 194; Bork 2014, 5). The system of honour affirmed by the householder in Q 13:25 is subverted by the householder in Q 14:23 (Scott 1989, 173-174). The parable could even be poking fun at the very institutions and practices that validate and enable social distinctions, including banquets (Scott 1981, 38; cf. Funk 1966, 190, 195-196; Bryan 2002, 79-80).

The point of narrating the individual instances of initial rejection is to provide the realistic background against which the invitation of random people off the streets is ultimately made (cf. Hunter 1971, 11-12). The foregoing statement is intended as an argument against the claim by a small number of scholars that the initial rejection of the invitation is just as surprising and shocking as the decision to invite random people, if

²³ It has to be noted, even if only in a footnote, that despite the householder's charity, the slave is not emancipated, and we are not told whether or not he was allowed to participate in the feast. Slaves were at times allowed to join the master's table (Harding 2003, 223; Joshel 2010, 126; cf. Massey and Moreland 1992, 52), but during important events they were utilised to serve and entertain guests (Massey and Moreland 1992, 27, 38-39, 52; Bradley 1994, 57, 64, 87-88; Matz 2002, 20; Harding 2003, 222-223; Hezser 2005, 140, 175; Joshel 2010, 133-134, 146-148). Although they were on occasion allowed to eat some of the leftovers (Bradley 1994, 83; Joshel 2010, 146-148), they were also subject to elevated levels of mistreatment and punishment during these events (Massey and Moreland 1992, 27, 52; Matz 2002, 20; cf. Bradley 1994, 64).

not more so (e.g. Perrin 1967, 114; Blomberg 1990, 234; Luz 2005, 50; cf. Funk 1966, 188-189; Funk and Hoover 1993, 352, 353, 510).²⁴ People are inherently untrustworthy, and arranging a social gathering that ends up being unattended is an experience to which many people can relate (cf. Blomberg 1990, 234). Crossan (1985, 45) comments that the excuses were “plausible and possible, realistic and polite.”²⁵ Funk (2006, 134) even claims that the acts of declining the invitation in the parable were to be expected, given the people’s respective reasons and responsibilities. According to him, “the hearer would have been surprised if they didn’t [decline].”²⁶ At most, one could say that an unattended dinner is uncommon, but certainly not unprecedented. By contrast, inviting every Tom, Dick and Harry off the streets to one’s house for a party is unheard of. This is the aspect of the story that shatters the expectations and experience of everyday reality, and proposes an alternative in its place (see Funk 2006, 43-51, 134-135, 172, 173; cf. Funk and Hoover 1993, 352; Kirk 1998, 253; Zimmermann 2009, 175). It follows that the emphasis of the story and heart of the metaphor is the host’s decision to invite unknown street people to his house (Marshall 1978, 589; *pace* Perrin 1967, 114). This is supported by certain literary characteristics in v. 21 that signify Q 14:21, 23 as the parable’s crisis-denouement: (1) the temporal particle “then” (τότε); (2) the description of the householder as being “enraged” (ὀργίζω); and (3) the closer identification of the protagonist as a “householder” (οἰκοδεσπότης) after initially only introducing him as “a certain person” (ἄνθρωπός τις) (see Funk 2006, 122-124; cf. Funk 1966, 166; Funk and Hoover 1993, 510; Roth 2014, 384-387).

The Parable of the Great Supper picks up on the theme of the two parables that precede it in Q 13:18-21 by comparing the kingdom of God to the unexpected and improper presence of riffraff and random people at a well-to-do dinner party (cf. Allison 2000, 221-222; Nolland 2005, 888). Just like the mustard seed contaminates the garden, and the leaven contaminates the flour, the improper guests contaminate the well-to-do event (cf. Vaage 1994, 65). After the Babylonian exile, table fellowship became for Israel the stage upon which holiness and ritual purity were rehearsed and performed (see Borg 1984, 94-96). The mere mention of a banquet would have evoked for the ancient audience associations with purity. In the Parable of the Great Supper, the mere presence of “street folk” defiles the whole event (cf. Borg 1984, 96). Not only time and space are polluted, but also those few guests who might have been pure or superior. One is reminded of the tradition of Jesus eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners (Q 7:34), illustrating how he enacted and lived the vision of God’s kingdom as

²⁴ This is not to claim that the specific content of the excuses was thematically insignificant for Q, especially in the document’s final form (cf. Fleddermann 2005, 740; Johnson-DeBaufre 2005, 104; Snodgrass 2008, 307; cf. Q 12:33-34; 16:13; 17:26-27, 30; 19:26).

²⁵ Yet, Crossan continues to say that, at least for Luke, the politeness might have been hypocritical and pretentious.

²⁶ Even if the excuses were lame, something that Funk (1966, 186) acknowledges, together with just about every other commentator.

communicated by his parables (Marshall 1978, 585; Snodgrass 2008, 311, 314, 316; cf. Etchells 1998, 189; Scott 2002, 24; Luz 2005, 51; see Funk 1966, 179-180, 196-198; Crossan 1991, 261-262; Bryan 2002, 79-80).

The kingdom of God is not what one would expect (cf. Bock 1996, 1276, 1278; Luz 2001, 261). Just like the mustard shrub is a far cry from the mighty cedar of Lebanon, the unruly gathering of street folk is a far cry from the formal event of elected elite (Scott 1981, 38; 1989, 173; cf. Funk 1966, 190; 2006, 173). That those who were initially invited represent the upper class is indicated not only by the content of their excuses,²⁷ but also by the fact that a slave is sent to summon them (Jeremias 1972, 176-177; Marshall 1978, 585-586; Scott 1981, 35-36; 1989, 169; Bock 1996, 1272, 1274; Kirk 1998, 252-253; Horsley 1999, 284; Luz 2005, 52; Snodgrass 2008, 313). One could argue against the second previous point by pointing out that the “street people” are also summoned by the householder’s slave, but the whole aim of the parable is precisely to sketch a scenario in which the poor end up being treated like the rich would normally be treated. It seems reasonable to assume that the first round of guests were of the same social standing as the householder, who is portrayed as being wealthy (Scott 1981, 35; 1989, 169; Kirk 1998, 253; cf. Hezser 2005, 175; Bork 2014, 5; Roth 2014, 384-385). To be sure, the mere fact that these guests decline an invitation to a large dinner with plenty of food is reason enough to assume that they constitute wealthy individuals.

The previous observation introduces another layer of interpretation that is particularly relevant for the Sayings Gospel Q. In the Parable of the Great Supper, the kingdom of God is likened to an event at which everyone receives food, including especially the poor (cf. Funk 1966, 191; Kirk 1998, 253; Horsley 1999, 284-285; Valantasis 2005, 190-191, 192). For Q, God’s kingdom has to do with the feeding of the poor²⁸ and the healing of the sick²⁹ (Robinson 1993, 15; 2001a, 16; 2001b, 33; 2002, 15; Vaage 1994, 63, 64; cf. Piper 2000, 241, 251, 259; Valantasis 2005, 190-191; Horsley 2012, 127; see 2003, 30-33, 35; Kloppenborg 2001, 166; cf. Järvinen 2001, 521). Like the parables in Q 13:18-21, the growth and expansion of God’s kingdom is a peripheral motif in the Parable of the Great Supper. As in the former parables, the focus of this peripheral motif might be on the contrast between the kingdom’s beginning and its end, seeing as the affair starts out lacking a single guest, but ends up with a house filled to the brim (cf. Kirk 1998, 246-247). In all three parables, the remarkable end is achieved through the indiscriminate introduction of impurity. With the Parable of the Great Supper, the magnificent house party is made possible by the presence of socio-economic and religio-cultic undesirables (cf. Scott 1981, 38, 39). All three parables

²⁷ Even though the excuses are difficult to reconstruct precisely, both Matthew and Luke feature excuses that would apply typically to the wealthy.

²⁸ Cf. Q 6:20-21; 10:8-9; 11:2-3; 12:31; 13:28-29.

²⁹ Cf. Q 10:9; 11:20.

seem to promote social transformation through the replacement of existing socio-religio-political patterns with an alternate reality dubbed “the kingdom of God” (Kloppenborg 2001, 169; Vaage 1994, 56; 2001, 486; cf. Borg 1984, 96; Funk and Hoover 1993, 485, 352; Kloppenborg 2000b, 81, 108; Zimmermann 2009, 175). Piper (2000, 236) is probably correct that the Parable of the Great Supper is not primarily concerned with the categories of rich and poor in Q’s main redaction, but it does seem that these categories were in focus at the level of Q’s formative stratum.

In addition to catchword connections and thematic continuity, the internal links between the individual traditions that make up Q 13:18-19, 20-21, 24-25; 14:16-21, 23 are strengthened by some form of chronological development: (1) ingredients are cultivated in Q 13:18-19; (2) food is prepared in Q 13:20-21; (3) the door is opened in Q 13:24; (4) entry is restricted in Q 13:25; (5) invited guests are summoned in Q 14:16-17; (6) the invited guests decline in Q 14:18-20; and (7) all restrictions are lifted so that anyone may enter in Q 14:21, 23. The catchword, thematic and chronological connections suggested in this section go some way toward explaining the ostensibly inappropriate position of Q 13:18-21 in the main redaction (cf. Sato 1994, 173; see Kloppenborg 1995, 308-311). Seemingly, the main redactor inserted material between Q 13:18-19, 20-21, 24-25 and Q 14:16-21, 23, thereby changing the meaning of both texts, but at the same time weakening and eliminating internal linkage between them.³⁰

To sum up, if the Parable of the Great Supper is considered in its context in the formative stratum, it results in an interpretation that develops three complementary and overlapping themes at the same time: (1) everyone is welcome in God’s kingdom, but the needy and unclean are particularly welcome (Horsley 1999, 284-285); (2) contamination is a necessary attribute of God’s kingdom; and (3) food is available for everyone in God’s kingdom. Conversely, the following aspects that were important for the parable’s interpretation in the main redaction are not on the table at all if it is interpreted as part of the formative stratum: (1) a distinction between insiders and outsiders;³¹ (2) any indication that the parable should be read allegorically; and (3) any indication that the parable is about an eschatological banquet. In fact, the Q¹ context specifically seems to speak against and rule out these avenues of interpretation. Significantly, Jeremias (1972, 67-69) blames the source shared by Matthew and Luke (referring to Q) for introducing these interpretive avenues into the Parable of the Great Supper (cf. Donahue 1988, 94). At present, we can say with greater specificity that Q’s main redactor was in all likelihood the responsible party.

It should be acknowledged that, in view of the exposition offered in this section, the Parable of the Great Supper fits just as well in its literary context in the formative

³⁰ While also creating new possibilities for linking Q 13:18-21 to surrounding material, even if these novel links were weaker and subtler than the original links in the formative stratum (cf. Kloppenborg 1995, 309-311).

³¹ Irrespective of whether the distinction is between Israel and Gentiles or between those at the geo-political centre, like the Jerusalem elite, and those on the geo-political periphery, like the Diaspora.

stratum as it does in its literary context in the main redaction. This claim also applies if my earlier proposal that Q 13:25 originally belonged to the formative stratum is rejected, since the parable in Q 14:16-21, 23 seems to relate to the other material that precedes it as well. Nevertheless, my proposal does seem to be presently corroborated by the observation that Q 13:25 provides a smooth transition between the material in Q 13:18-21, 24 and the parable in Q 14:16-21, 23. It does so in three distinct ways: (1) through catchword connection; (2) through thematic continuity; and (3) through chronological development.

4 A formative context

If the parable in Q 14:16-21, 23 is considered in isolation, there is reason to argue that its content is more conducive to its place in the formative stratum than in the main redaction. On the one hand, each of the three themes developed by the parable in its Q¹ context, as listed above, are already suggested by the content of the parable itself. One does not need to go outside the parable itself to see the imagined scenario as one (1) where everyone is welcome, especially the needy; (2) where defilement is a real possibility; and (3) where food is freely available. On the other hand, the themes developed by the parable in its Q² context, as outlined by Kloppenborg, are not inherent to the parable itself, but require a literary context to enforce the desired interpretation. In other words, the story as it unfolds in the parable itself says nothing about the exclusion of Israel from eschatological merriment in favour of Gentiles. As with all allegory, this theme is introduced into the parable from outside its own boundaries. One could perhaps argue that the theme of “defilement” follows from the context of Q 13:18-21, and not from the parable itself. As the interpretations of some parable scholars indicate, however, the parable does not require a literary context to reveal its obvious suggestions of religio-cultural defilement (e.g. Borg 1984, 94-96). The mere mention of the presence of “street folk” at a well-to-do dinner party would have sufficed to evoke the theme of defilement. It follows that if one interprets the parable in isolation, its inherent themes fit much better with its context in the formative stratum than it does with its context in the main redaction. As such, one can make a strong case that the parable has more claim for placement in the formative stratum if measured against Kloppenborg’s criterion of characteristic motifs.

The same applies to his criterion of characteristic form. Q 14:16-21, 23 is one of only a few proper narrative parables in Q, with most of the other examples qualifying rather as similitudes (cf. Davies and Allison 1991, 416; Funk 2006, 31). In its capacity as a parable, Q 14:16-21, 23 qualifies formally as a piece of wisdom (cf. Edwards 1976, 74; see Kirk 1998, 234, 246-248). Even if the content of any particular parable happens to feature eschatological, apocalyptic or prophetic themes and/or small forms, it still operates as part of the teaching experience to incite reflection and contemplation. In this

regard, the following comment by Funk (2006, 104) is informative: “*What the parable says cannot be simply divorced from the way it says. Form and content are wedded.*”³² In the case of Q 14:16-21, 23, where the content is only eschatological and/or prophetic if so interpreted, the formal classification of the parable as wisdom is even more definite and determinative.

That only leaves the criterion of implied audience. Since boundary demarcation is one of the themes necessitated by the Q² context, but not inherent to the parable itself, it follows that the parable, if considered on its own, fails to develop this theme in particular. In fact, the parable’s content actually seems to contradict and prohibit any manner of division between insiders and outsiders (*pace* Crossan 1985, 51-52). The parable ends with the doors being flung wide open so that everyone and anyone may enter the feast, without distinction (Crossan 1991, 262; Nolland 2005, 888; cf. Valantasis 2005, 191).³³ A *private* event is transformed into an extended bash that permeates *all* segments of society, almost like *hidden* leaven would transform and permeate *massive* amounts of flour (cf. Scott 2002, 23). The purpose of the transformation is precisely to break down established boundaries, not to invert, create or strengthen them. Such transformation is not at all dissimilar from efforts throughout ancient Greece to include in various ways ordinary citizens in the symposia and comparable festivities of the elite (see Fisher 1998, 213-218). In first-century Rome, a certain Marcus Licinius Crassus apparently hosted suppers on a daily basis that were open to “anyone and everyone” at his house (Joshel 2010, 50). Such conduct is perhaps less radical as an act of benefaction than it would be as a deliberate attempt to erase social and other boundaries (Crossan 1991, 262).

On the logic of the parable itself, even those who initially declined the invitation would presumably be welcome should they change their minds and arrive at the party anyway (*pace* Funk 1966, 190; Jeremias 1972, 179-180; Borg 1984, 220; Jacobson 1992, 218; Bock 1996, 1270). These individuals would then in some way be included in the banquet. As the motive clause “so that my house may be filled” (ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος) makes clear, the householder’s intent is to fill his house with guests (Jeremias 1972, 177; Valantasis 2005, 192; cf. Bock 1996, 1277). As far as this objective is concerned, banning people from his party would be counterproductive, including anyone who initially declined the invitation. To be sure, the Q parable nowhere asserts expressly that the first group of invitees were to be excluded as a matter of principle (*pace* Piper 2000, 236; Bryan 2002, 77).³⁴ True enough, the parable also fails to mention

³² Emphasis original.

³³ Although the Parable of the Great Supper should not at the level of Q¹ be interpreted in terms of futurist eschatology, its indiscriminate inclusivity is comparable to similar visions of broad inclusivity in traditional descriptions of the eschatological banquet (cf. Bryan 2002, 78, 81; cf. Isa 25:6-8).

³⁴ One could point to the householder’s angry reaction to argue that he would not have welcomed the first round of invitees if they pitched up anyway (cf. Funk 1966, 165; Bryan 2002, 77, 80). Yet, the householder’s emotive response is featured in Q to motivate his unorthodox reaction of inviting random

expressly that the first group of invitees would have been *included* if they showed up anyway. Yet, its failure to explicitly address the fate of the original invitees at all goes to show how unimportant their inclusion or exclusion was to the parable's original function in Q. Conversely, the indiscriminate inclusion of "whomever you find" is indeed mentioned explicitly.

Socio-economic categories, though important, do not function as a means of distinguishing between insiders and outsiders (cf. Bork 2014, 5; *pace* Funk 1966, 192). If it did, the householder would not have been welcome at his own party. Instead, socio-economic categories function to emphasise that all people are welcome, and that the destitute are sure to attend in abundance for that very reason (cf. Crossan 1974a, 85). All guests will end up being defiled anyway, placing them all on the same social station (cf. Scott 1981, 37, 38; 1989, 173, 174). Impurity will spread through the whole gathering, like leaven corrupting huge amounts of flour until all of it is defiled (cf. Scott 2002, 23). For this very reason, it is unlikely that (m)any of the initial invitees would have attended, even if they were otherwise welcome. In addition, the fact that they had already declined the invitation would further have deterred them from attending. To some extent, it may therefore indeed be appropriate to refer to Q 14:16-21, 23 as a "parable of reversal" (cf. e.g. Crossan 1974a, 85; 1974b, 205, 214), but not as a "parable of exclusion," so that comprehensive and complete reversal is imposed. This is particularly true for the historical Jesus, who should in no way be associated with the programmatic promotion of social exclusion, not even of the corrupt Jewish leadership or well to do.³⁵ Q's formative stratum seems to have understood this message well. I find it at best interesting and at worst baffling that so many scholars interpret this parable in terms of across-the-board reversal, instead of across-the-board inclusivity.³⁶ The former is common enough in ancient literature, and ends up with the exact same boundaries, even though the representatives of the two groups are swapped around. Conversely, the latter is intrinsically subversive and fundamentally revolutionary, promoting an entirely novel constitution of reality, which Jesus called the "kingdom of God" (cf. Zimmermann 2009, 175).

It is the evangelists who were guilty of adding explicit reference to the deliberate exclusion of the initial invitees. In Matt 22:8 (NRSV), the narrative's protagonist explicitly says that "those invited [initially] were not worthy" (Bock 1996, 1276). In v. 10, the narrator goes on to say that "the wedding [hall] was filled" (ἐπλήσθη ὁ γάμος).

people to his house (cf. Crossan 1974a, 85). Most people would get upset under similar circumstances (cf. Crossan 1985, 45), but most people would also get over it pretty soon. What is more, Scott (1989, 168) argues that the reference to the householder's anger is a later addition to the parable, and that the absence of such a reference in the Gospel of Thomas (64) is more original (cf. Funk 1966, 167; Crossan 1985, 45, 48). If so, Q's main redactor could very well have been responsible for this addition, so that it was absent from the formative stratum.

³⁵ Criticism is not the same as exclusion.

³⁶ There are exceptions, including most notably Crossan (1991, 262).

Luz (2005, 51-52) correctly deduces from this information that the opportunity for attending had by that stage expired, so that those who initially declined the invitation were thereby excluded as a matter of principle (cf. Scott 1981, 37; Etchells 1998, 186; Bork 2014, 5). It would in any case have been impossible for these people to attend, since they had according to v. 7 already been annihilated (cf. Jeremias 1972, 33). The mistake Luz makes is to apply this line of reasoning to the level of the historical Jesus (cf. Etchells 1998, 188, 190). Like Matthew, Luke refuses to allow the initial invitees a place at the banquet, and has Jesus overtly state at 14:24 (NRSV) that “none of those who were invited will taste my dinner” (Funk, Scott and Butts 1988, 43; Funk and Hoover 1993, 352; Bock 1996, 1268, 1278; Etchells 1998, 186; Snodgrass 2008, 305; see Funk 1966, 165, 173-175, 182-183, 186-187; Neirynck 1982, 63-64, 67). These Synoptic emphases obscure the original intent of the parable, which was to advocate the breaking down of boundaries through practices like open commensality.

Yet, the evangelists should not in this instance be blamed for polluting the tradition (cf. Jeremias 1972, 69). Liability rather falls on Q’s main redactor. As we have seen, the parable ends in Q with the motive clause “so that my house may be filled” (ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος), which supports the likelihood that those who initially declined would have been welcome had they attended anyway. The parable’s literary context in the formative stratum does little to contradict this scenario, and the focus remains on indiscriminate admittance. By contrast, the parable’s literary context in the main redaction complicates the scenario to such an extent that one has to assume the exclusion of the initial invitees (cf. esp. Q 13:26-27, 28). Hence, the source critic can witness before her very eyes the evolution of the tradition along these lines: (1) the historical Jesus tells a parable that imagines the kingdom of God as a place where access is not restricted; (2) Q’s formative stratum links this parable to other parables with overlapping themes; (3) Q’s main redactor adds further material that obscures the openness of the original parable, and introduces the motif of demarcation between insiders and outsiders (cf. Kloppenborg 1995, 292, 300; Kirk 1998, 251; Smith 2014, 52-53); (4) the evangelists make explicit the motif of condemning outsiders that was only implied by the literary context in the final form of Q (cf. Scott 1989, 168). Similar evolutionary steps could be isolated for other components of our parable, including most notably its growth from a non-allegorical parable to a fiercely allegorised narrative. The initial transition to allegory seems to have happened first during the inception of Q’s main redaction. To conclude, if the parable is considered in isolation, Kloppenborg’s criteria of characteristic forms, characteristic motifs and implied audience almost demand a position for it in the formative stratum.

5 Conclusion

Convincing as it might be, Kloppenborg's analysis of Q 14:16-21, 23 relies on circular reasoning. If the parable is considered in its literary context in the main redaction, it leads to an interpretation that supports its allocation to the main redaction. My own analysis in the first part of this article is no less dependent on circular reasoning. Considering the parable in its probable location in the formative stratum proffers an interpretation thereof that supports its allocation to the formative stratum. This observation is not a cause for despair. Instead, it suggests that the Parable of the Great Supper featured in formative stratum before it was incorporated into the main redaction. This is substantiated by my analysis in the second part of this article, which is not at all dependent on circular reasoning, and involves the application of Kloppenborg's criteria to the parable itself, in total disregard of any literary context. With Kloppenborg, I have little doubt that the parable stood in the main redaction at that stage of the document's diachronic development. Its literary context in the main redaction is just too conveniently appropriate to be coincidental or irrelevant. Even so, an equal or greater measure of appropriateness in the context of the formative stratum strongly suggests that the main redactor inherited this tradition from the formative stratum, and changed its former meaning. Brilliantly, this was achieved without changing the content of the parable at all, but by merely adding different material in front of it.

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